

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: ANDRES BATATAS, retired hospital worker

Andres Batatas, Visayan, was born February 4, 1895 in Barelli, Cebu. He came to Kauai as a single man in 1921 and has never married.

He became a camp policeman at Koloa Plantation; he continued as a camp policeman during the 1924 strike. On the day of the Hanapepe incident, he was called in to assist in rounding up the strikers.

Andres held a variety of jobs including aide at Mahelona Hospital, pineapple plantation worker, and on a ship. He later returned to work at Mahelona Hospital until his retirement in 1960. He currently lives in Kapaa.

Tape No. 5-16-1-78
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Andres Batatas (AB)
September 12, 1978
Kapaa, Kauai
BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

NOTE: Translation and interpretation by Constance Estenzo and Father Ed Gerlock; indicated as "I."

GG: This is an interview with Andres Batatas at his home in Kapaa. The date is September 12, 1978. The interviewer is Gael Gouveia. Mrs. Estenzo is helping with the translation.

Okay, maybe you can tell again for the tape when you were born and where you came from.

AB: Barelli, Philippine Islands. February. 1895.

GG: And when did you come to Hawaii?

AB: In 1922. I was 23 years old. In 1914, I was 18 years old.

GG: And how did you decide to come to Hawaii?

AB: I was a soldier before, the Philippines constabulary. And I decided to....I run away. All time fight.

I: He said he ran away from his own country.

GG: How did you hear about Hawaii? Who told you about Hawaii?

AB: By my own whim to come to Hawaii. Nobody talk to me.

GG: How did you know where to go to catch the boat to come?

AB: Hawaii, I know. Sabe, I know Hawaii.

I: Yes, but there in Cebu, how did you know what to do? Did you go directly to Immigration?

AB: I went to the Immigration.

GG: You remember the name of the ship you came on?

AB: President Lincoln.

GG: How long took you to get here?

AB: It was one week on the President Lincoln, to come from Cebu to here.

GG: How long you stayed in Honolulu at the Immigration there?

AB: I was one week in the Honolulu Immigration.

GG: Then came to Nawiliwili?

AB: From Nawiliwili. I landed in Nawiliwili and then I went to Hanalei.

GG: And which plantation did you work for then?

AB: I worked for three days and then I moved to Koloa.

GG: Where did you live, then, in Koloa? What camp?

AB: Kampo Filipino.

GG: What was your job?

AB: Contract. I worked for the irrigation department the first time, and then I became a camp police.

GG: And when you were working for the irrigation, what kind of a luna did you have?

I: When you were working on the plantation what kind of a boss did you have? Were you yourself the boss?

AB: I was a luna.

GG: When you first went to Koloa you were a luna?

I: No, no. He worked for the irrigation and then later on he was promoted to be a luna. And then from there he became a camp police.

GG: When you were a luna, how many men you took charge of?

AB: I had eight men under me.

GG: And what was your job? That was still irrigation?

I: Yeah, he was a luna for the irrigation department, which they called, "contract."

GG: Then how long was it before you became camp police?

AB: I was about five years as a luna.

GG: When did you become camp police? Do you remember the year?

AB: I cannot remember because I'm so old.

GG: Were you still at Koloa then at strike time, 1924?

AB: Uh huh, yes. I was a camp police already then.

GG: What was your job as camp police? What did you have to do?

AB: I check up on the laborers, those who do not go to work, they stay home.

GG: Can you tell a little bit about that? Did you bang on the doors, or how did you get them to go to work?

AB: I didn't treat the Filipinos in a bad manner. I was always friendly to them. Everybody friend. No trouble. Da kine fight Hanapepe, me, I go too.

GG: I want to get to that in a few minutes. Right before that, did you ever hear Manlapit come around by Koloa?

AB: Oh yeah. Yes, I was there when the strike took place.

I: When they were putting up the organization, when Manlapit was talking and putting up the organization were you there?

AB: There was a strike there in Koloa.

I: Pablo Manlapit, he did not hold any strike in Koloa. It was only in Honolulu, he said. But those employees of the Koloa Plantation were involved in the strike [on Kauai].

GG: Do you remember how many from Koloa went out to strike?

AB: Many, but I couldn't count.

GG: But it was plenty then. Do you know---did Koloa have like local leaders; not Manlapit but right there?

I: Do you know who the bigger people were of the local groups of followers of Manlapit? Do you know who was the one who led the group? Do you know who the leaders were?

AB: No. I don't know who was among the leaders because I was trying to oversee only the people.

GG: How come you didn't go on strike? Somebody told you not to because you were camp police?

AB: I had no intention to join in the strike.

GG: Can you say why? One reason they [other interviewees] tell us is because they didn't want to wreck their record at the plantation. But did you have special reasons?

AB: I did not like to join in the strike because I didn't like any trouble.

GG: Nobody told you---anybody in the plantation telling you, "No, don't you go strike?"

I: Nobody. And he didn't like to be involved in the strike.

GG: When the trouble at Hanapepe happened, how did you hear about it?

AB: I went over there to check the strikers. Because being a camp police, it was my duty to try to check on them.

GG: Who did you go over with?

AB: There were many camp police. All camp police go. Bumbai the policemen were with me; they go too. And Mr. Rice, tell them all come.

I: Because many of the camp police went over there, and some of the national guard of Mr. Rice went too. So he joined in the group.

GG: Did you go the day they had the shootings or did you go the next day?

AB: That was after the fight when I went there, because I saw already that many had died.

GG: When you got there, what did you see?

I: When you went there, what did you see? Were they already dead? And then he answers, "Yeah, that's right, they're dead."

AB: All I could see only some of the women were jumping into the water and some were already.... On the side, I go say, "Eh, what's the matter you?"

"Now, no more trouble."

I: He said only those women who had jump in the water to save their lives because there had been shooting.

GG: What about the men? Had men jumped into the river too, or had they already taken all the men to Waimea Courthouse?

I: What happened to the men who were not hit by the machine gun? Were they not caught immediately?

AB: No.

GG: Did you help them get out, or did you have to put handcuffs? Were you helping to arrest them?

I: Did you help capture those men that had to be caught?

AB: I pulled them out of the water and told them to join in the group to go to Nawiliwili.

GG: When you went, you went in somebody's car, or you went in your own car?

AB: I went in the car of the police.

GG: Do you remember anybody else who was in the truck with you?

AB: I cannot remember already. Only that I can remember is only Bob, that's all.

GG: Anybody in the truck, did they talk about what they might find when they got there, or had Mr. Rice told them what to do when they got there, give 'em any orders or instructions?

AB: No. It was enough just to accompany them.

GG: Do you remember what you were thinking about on the way over there?

AB: All I could think of, just to be friendly. I didn't like any trouble.

GG: When you got to Hanapepe, did you see Sheriff Crowell at all?

AB: Yeah, I saw.

I: When you saw him, what did he look like? He was wounded, no?

AB: That's right, he was.

I: He was wounded, how was he wounded? Was he stabbed, stuck with something?

AB: yes.

I: Do you mean to say that he died immediately?

AB: No.

GG: But Crowell was there. Did he have his head wrapped up?

AB: The wound was not so big. It was a small wound. But he was safe. Mr. Crowell, that time, was safe. But he was been shot. But the wound was not so big.

- GG: About how many other camp police went with you in the truck?
- I: When you took the dead and the prisoners to Nawiliwili how many companions did you have with you? [He only took prisoners, no dead].
- AB: There were three camp policemen that had accompanied the prisoners, that they took over to Nawiliwili.
- I: How about the dead people, what did you do with them?
- AB: All I can remember, when the shooting happened two Hawaiian men were killed, 13 of the Filipino men were killed. Luckily they had the banana patch that had save the other strikers.
- I: How many of the strikers got away without anything happening to them, without getting hurt or getting killed? So there were 13 who were hit, how about the others that nothing happened to them, what about them, how many were they?
- AB: There were many of the strikers that were saved that day.
- GG: Did you have to go with the prisoners to Nawiliwili?
- AB: Yeah, I was one of them that would accompany the prisoners.
- GG: Do you remember---did the prisoners talk to each other, or talk to you?
- I: When you were on your way to Nawiliwili what was it like? Were you talking to one another, did they talk to you?
- AB: Most of them were their friends, when they talk and they shake hands. I was also talking to them, and they were afraid of what might happen. Some of them were sent back to the Philippines.
- GG: Were they expressing concern or upset about their friends in the strike camp that had been killed?
- I: What did they feel, those people who were put in jail? Did they feel sad because of their companions who had been killed?
- AB: No.
- I: What do you mean? You mean that they're not sorry that their companions had been killed?
- AB: Only those men who had relatives that was killed during the time. Only those, they were concerned and they felt sorry for the incident.
- GG: What about in the truck, were they scared about what was going to happen to them when they got to the courthouse?

AB: They were very brave that time. They never bin felt scared or what.

GG: Were they angry?

AB: Oh, yes. Because during that time there was one man they said had some kind of....something and he has the power.

I: What he meant to say, had the power that when you shoot him the bullets will not go into him. But during that time it happened that man was not around. Only the co-strikers were around. So when he came it happened already. The shooting had happened.

GG: Do you remember how many you actually helped to get out of the river?

AB: There were five. Men and women, there were five of them.

GG: And they took the men to Nawiliwili?

AB: They were hiding underneath the sailboat. There was a sailboat around, two sailboats. And all I could see was the nose so I pulled them out of the water.

I look, "Eh, what's the matter?"

GG: Did you help round up any of the ones in the banana patch?

AB: I didn't have anybody that was running around the banana patch. Only those who were in the river. When I arrived the shooting was [finished] already, you know. After the shooting, what we did is we helped to put together, to just kind of clean up after the whole thing had happened.

GG: That day did you actually stay in Hanapepe?

AB: I helped about two hours.

GG: And did you only take the ones out of the river, put them in the cars or truck or whatever, and then take them to Nawiliwili, and then you didn't go back to Hanapepe? Only one trip?

AB: Those who jumped in the river they never have to put them in the prison. Only those who were in the banana patch that was caught by the police--that was the one that was taken to prison. But those five men that he had help, that was under the water did not go prison.

GG: How come they didn't have to go to prison?

AB: Never have trouble. Those who had jump into the water they don't make any trouble. But they never include them in the group.

- GG: So they just went back to the camp to stay?
- AB: Those five people that went under the water was not included in the group of those other strikers.
- GG: Did you help take the other ones to the calaboose?
- I: How many people were you accompanying to Nawiliwili, those were the people who didn't jump into the water but the ones who were in the banana patch and were sort of responsible for the strike?
- AB: Those who he had accompany going to Nawiliwili are those who were in the banana patch.
- GG: And had room enough for all of them in the calaboose?
- I: Was there room in the jail at that time, because the jail was awful small?
- AB: They had two room.
- I: It was like being in a can of sardines, eh? How could they sleep in a place like that?
- AB: They just sat down. (Laughs)
- GG: Did you go inside?
- I: You didn't go inside, did you? You were there on the outside?
- AB: I was just outside, looking at them.
- GG: Could you see then? Did they have room to sit down?
- I: They were all sitting down on the floor.
- GG: But they were squished together?
- I: Squished, like sardines.
- AB: Not long time. About three days. "Ah, we go home."
- I: And then they were sent back to PI.
- GG: Did they have trials? Did they have to stand trial?
- AB: Yeah, of course they had to stand trial because especially two of them who had a crime. They were going to send them right back to the Philippines.
- I: For the 13 people who died, who's going to take the rap? Who's fault is that? So it's the fault of the strikers then that these

people died. Because they were agitating and that's who eventually people died?

AB: Those Filipinos that were strikers that were in the jailhouse, they were sent back to PI. But those were, they had no fault. Only the four men that were killed, that had brought the trouble and was been shot, those were the ones that were sentenced that day.

I: Substantially, that's what he's saying. He starts out by saying that it was the strikers' fault anyway, and so that's why they had to be put on trial. But as the discussion continues, he's beginning to say it's the four people who were killed, basically, who had caused the trouble. But the ones who were deported had committed no crime.

These four people who were killed, did they have a family? Because they were killed and if they had a family, how would their family take care of themselves, and how would they know what happened, etc.,

AB: They may have had a family but maybe it was back in the Philippines.

I: He's saying that there were quite a few who were sent back to the Philippines. And he's implying that it was unjustly that they were sent back.

GG: That day with Hanapepe then, did you just go back to Koloa and being camp police there?

AB: Yeah, I went back to work.

GG: Before the Hanapepe trouble, you had mentioned helping the strikers--- that you helped the Koloa strikers by donating food or money?

AB: I was giving so that there would be no trouble. I wanted to be friends with everybody.

GG: Does he remember who came to collect?

AB: I forgot the name. I don't remember anybody.

I: Well, how about this guy Isidoro, was he not also included in the group that was making the collection?

AB: No, he was not included.

GG: Who was Koloa manager at that time? Do you remember the manager's name?

I: He cannot remember because he passed away already.

GG: That's okay if you can't remember. I just wonder if the boss told

you---gave you any orders if he saw the strikers coming to collect. Did the boss give you orders to catch them?

AB: The boss did not tell me anything.

GG: Because I know others remember the camp police were trying to catch the ones who were collecting.

I: You weren't asked to go out and try and catch the people who were making the collection of rice and things needed for the strikers?

AB: No. I just let 'em go because I was not given any instructions to.

GG: Do you remember what you gave to the collectors?

AB: Money.

I: He didn't give rice? He didn't give canned goods?

AB: No.

I: He gave money. And sometimes he would give \$20 or even \$25.

GG: When he went to Hanapepe that day, did Sheriff Rice go too, with them?

AB: Yeah, Sheriff Rice was together with them. He is the government. No, he is not the sheriff, he is the government.

I: Well, then who was the Sheriff?

AB: The sheriff at that time was a kanaka. I cannot remember what was Mr. Rice, what his title, if an officer. He was an officer. I cannot remember what his title was but the fact was that he could give orders and people would obey him, and he had soldiers under him.

GG: Koloa is kind of on the west side or is considered east side?

I: I think that's the west side.

GG: Okay, the day when they got to Hanapepe, when the camp police arrived there, anybody talked to them and said, "Okay, let's go find whoever's left," or did they have some kind of orders to know what to do?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

- AB: We were given instructions by the regular police. Not the camp police because the camp police is under the plantation. So that mean the camp police, we went over there to help out. We just only went there to help out. And whatever instructions they get from the police, we followed. But we were told to help.
- GG: Were there many other Filipino camp police that went, or were you the only Filipino camp police?
- AB: There were four Filipino camp police.
- I: (Mrs. Estenzo) By the way, my father was also a camp police. Had never heard about that?
- AB: No.
- GG: After the trouble was all over, what happened? Everybody just went back to work?
- AB: Yeah, they just went home. No more, they just went home. That's all there was to it. And I went back to my work.
- GG: And when the strike was all pau, which was later after that trouble, did your plantation let the strikers come back to work--that went out from Koloa?
- AB: Those who were not sent home, back to PI, well, they went back to their homes and went back to work. Many of them went back to work. And a lot also went back to the Philippines.
- GG: And how long did you work plantation?
- AB: Four years. And after the four years I worked for Mahelona Hospital.
- GG: And what was your job there?
- AB: Helper.
- I: He was an aide, like.
- GG: And how come he went out of the plantation?
- AB: I decided by myself to go change my job.
- GG: Do you remember what year you changed jobs?
- AB: Four years on the plantation, then I went out. Then I went out and I went to the hospital, and I was in the hospital for two years. Then I went out and I worked on a pineapple plantation for three years. Then I went out and I worked on board ship, and I worked on board ship for three years.

I: You don't remember the year when you stopped working on the plantation?

AB: 1928.

GG: And then how long did you work for the hospital? Till he retired?

I: The last stage of his working career was after he finished working on board ship, he went back to the hospital and worked there until the time of his retirement.

GG: And how long you worked at Mahelona all together?

AB: I worked all together for 20 years.

GG: And then you retired from Mahelona Hospital. What year you retired?

AB: 1960.

GG: And since then, have you worked?

I: He never had work, he just stayed home. And what year you got sick?

AB: I never got sick.

I: No, about your feet.

AB: I don't remember the year when the sickness started on my feet. It was the time it was very cold here.

I: Probably 1973.

AB: I forgot.

GG: Anything else that you want to tell us about that I didn't ask about?

I: Is there anything left of your past experiences that were really good experiences, that you'd like to talk about?

AB: They were all good.

I: Yeah, yeah. I know that they're all good but is there anything else that you'd like to also add to this?

AB: I will be happy old man. I had no enemies. Only thing give me problem is my health now. With the old age.

GG: Did you ever go back to the Philippines?

I: No, I don't think. I encouraged him to go back and try to visit his relatives but I think he cannot make it already because of his leg.

AB: In 1941 I planned to go home to visit my family but it happened that I went fishing one day. And when I came back, that's the beginning of this trouble. When I woke up, I couldn't move already, my muscles.

I: He had a stroke.

AB: I can't remember, it was in the year 1970.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 5-34-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Andres Batatas (AB)

December 6, 1978

Kapaa, Kauai

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

Assisting with Translation and Interpretation: Constance Estenzo

GG: There are just a few more questions about your---you were a camp police in Koloa during the strike, and I wanted to find out if any of your friends or companions from Koloa had joined the strike.

AB: Yeah, that's my friends. From area of Bohol.

GG: From your camp, about how many joined the strike? Or do you remember?

AB: More or less, about 100 of the laborers.

GG: On the day of the shooting, how did you find out about the shooting? Who told you?

AB: Because I was a camp police, they had to notify. Somebody came over and had to notify the camp police and let us know.

GG: Was that a government police that came and notified you to go?

AB: Yeah, was one of the government police letting us know.

GG: How did you get to Hanapepe on that day?

AB: During that time, I had a car. So I rode my own car to Hanapepe.

GG: Did anybody go with you?

AB: Nobody. I was alone.

GG: Do you remember what time you went? Or about what time? Morning time?

AB: All I can remember, that I went in the morning time.

GG: When you got there, can you describe sort of step by step, what you did when you got there to Hanapepe? Where did you leave your car?

AB: I parked my car along the road.

GG: Close to the Japanese School?

AB: When I reached over there, I parked my car where the strike. And what I saw, all the people were scattered around. Maybe the strikers. And I saw the dead. Some were dead. Those who were killed. And I saw some of the strikers that went underneath the water. [Hanapepe River]

GG: Were you by the old bridge, or were you where the people were in the water?

AB: Those people that were underneath the water was trying to hide themselves. So I told them to come out because Mr. Rice was coming already.

GG: When they came out, did you take them or go with them to the Japanese School? Were you in the school yard and were there prisoners sitting down there?

AB: I told them to go back to their homes. And when they were walking I don't know where they were going. But I can remember the school. And I had to be around, watching the other people.

GG: As a camp police, were you actually deputized that day? Did somebody have to swear you in or tell you something to help with this round-up?

AB: I was ordered to help.

GG: What we heard was that they rounded up all the ones [strikers] that had run away after the shooting, and they made them sit in the school yard till they put 'em in trucks to take them to Nawiliwili. Did you see them or did you have to help keep any order?

AB: I did not go already to the school, but I was where the others were underneath the water. But I was only just watching the other people. But I saw those trucks that took them over to Nawiliwili.

GG: And how long that day did you actually stay in Hanapepe?

AB: I was about three hours, watching.

GG: And did you take any to Nawiliwili in your car? Or did you have to put handcuffs on anybody, and help them get into....

AB: The only thing that I---I was there just to watch and give them advice in what to do. But I did not accompany them, going to Nawiliwili.

GG: The police who took them to Nawiliwili, were they government police or plantation police?

AB: Yeah, that was supposed already. Because I was a camp police. Those who had help the strikers was government police.

GG: Do you know about how many policemen were there, when you were there? Both the regular police and the plantation police; how many police did they have there?

AB: I cannot remember the number of policemen. All I can say, that there were only three Filipino camp police that belonged to the plantation.

GG: Were they all from Koloa?

AB: One was from Eleele, one was from Lihue. So I was from Koloa. Different plantation, one camp police [from each].

GG: Did you see any of the women, the wives of the strikers? Why didn't they take them to the jail, or what happened to the women that day?

AB: No. The wives were left in their homes [in the strike camp], while the husbands---they never take the wives along.

GG: They left, then, at the Japanese School yard? Because that's where they were staying.

AB: They were sent home.

GG: Did you happen to talk to any of the women? Did any of the women ask you for advice?

AB: Well, I did not talk to any of them because all what I was doing, I was just only watching them.

GG: You had said last time--I don't know if I got it right or not--but you said sometimes when the strikers came to collect donations of food or money, I think you said you sometimes gave \$20 to \$25. It seems like an awful lot of money for that time, and I wondered how you happened to have that kind of money to donate to the strikers.

AB: I didn't give any money to the strikers.

GG: I see. I think you mentioned a sheriff, but I need to verify the name. Was there a sheriff by the name of Tanaka? What was his first name?

AB: Not Tanaka, kanaka. He was a sheriff of Koloa. His name was Willie. But he was a kanaka. His nationality is Hawaiian. But his name is Willie. Crowell was for Waimea.

GG: Were there many Ilocanos living in the same camp that you lived in, who did not go on strike?

AB: The Ilocanos did not join in the strike. It was only the Visayans. So they [Ilocanos] were like trying to make fun of the strikers so two of those Ilocanos were caught. And they had put it [them] in the sack. So that was the beginning of the fight.

GG: They put the Ilocanos in the sack?

AB: Two Ilocanos. They were caught by the strikers and they put them in the sack.

GG: I think those Ilocanos were from Makaweli, if I'm not sure. Alapio, I think, was one. Did you know him?

AB: I cannot remember.

GG: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have.

END OF INTERVIEW

The 1924 Filipino Strike on Kauai

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

June 1979